



Bereavement Policy

Date of last review: February 2024



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Background and Rationale

Our school pursues a deeply Christian vision. **We seek to equip children with the vision, passion and skills needed to transform society.** We want children to be ‘fired up’ about building God’s Kingdom here on Earth. It is a Kingdom where all can flourish, finding belonging and fulfilment. To fulfil this ambition, we rely on our culture of togetherness. As a team and school family, we actively seek to serve one another. We grow together in faith, wisdom and character. We struggle and face challenge together and nurture those that are in need love.

In seeking to create a community where all can flourish, we prioritise the health and wellbeing of all in our community. We want our pupils and staff to be physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthy. We also understand that life can provide challenges which we hope, as a school community, we can support our school family through. Death is something that most people choose not to think about, so when faced with it we often find ourselves ill prepared. Faith may provide a way of living hopefully and finding the things which give life a new sense.

During the process of bereavement, faith can help to acknowledge the reality of the loss experienced and to reconstruct life, valuing the things of the past and reaching out for new meaning in the future. Belief in the afterlife and in eventual reunion with those who have gone before can bring comfort and the view that death has a purpose and is not a random, meaningless event can be reassuring.

Experiencing a bereavement can make children more vulnerable. Bereavement, whether it is an expected death because of illness or a sudden and unexpected death or suicide, is something that can impact on members of our school community at any time. Around 41,000 children are bereaved of a parent every year in the UK. That’s nearly two children under 16 every hour. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person.

Our school is committed to the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff and pupils. We wish to work towards this in all aspects of school life, and to provide an ethos, environment and curriculum that prepares pupils for coping with bereavement. We pursue this aim using both universal, whole-school approaches and specialised, targeted approaches aimed at vulnerable pupils. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective bereavement policies, in line with our mental health and wellbeing policies and procedures, we can promote a safe and stable environment for pupils affected both directly, and indirectly by bereavement.

We recognise that members of the school community will be affected by a range of losses including separation and divorce. Some aspects of this policy may also be helpful in these cases.

This policy is for all staff, pupils, parents and carers, governors, visitors and partner agencies working within the school. It provides guidelines and procedures as to how our school can best prepare for, and respond to, bereavement in, and outside of, the school community.

This policy covers both the response to a death experienced for a small number of the school community (child/ siblings experiencing death of a significant person) and also a death that impacts upon the wider school community: this may be of a pupil or staff member.

This policy also links to the following other policies we hold in school: Safeguarding; PSHE; Pupil Mental Health and wellbeing; Staff wellbeing; Health and Safety policy; Leave of absence policy (staff).

Elements of this policy are based on an exemplar developed by the bereavement charity Winston’s Wish and The Diocese of Blackburn Bereavement Pack.

Purpose of the policy

This bereavement policy supports us to provide effective support to pupils and staff before and after bereavement. It covers both expected and unexpected deaths.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children and staff require. However, we also need to be prepared to call on more specialist support where there is a sudden and unexpected death, or where the impact of a bereavement is complex.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- enhance effective communication at a difficult time
- clarify the pathway of support between school, family, community and services
- make best use of the support available in school, wider agencies and the wider community.

Charter for bereaved children and young people

To help us meet the objectives of this policy we have adopted the [Winston's Wish Charter for Bereaved Children](#) and will display this in appropriate staff areas and on our website.

B	Bereavement support Bereaved children need to receive support from their family, from their school and from important people around them. We will signpost them to specialist support if needed.
E	Express feelings and thoughts We will help bereaved children to find appropriate ways to express all their feelings and thoughts associated with grief, such as sadness, anxiety, confusion, anger and guilt.
R	Remember the person who has died We understand that bereaved children have the right to remember the person who has died for the rest of their lives. We will support them to share special and difficult memories.
E	Education and information All children, particularly bereaved children, are entitled to receive answers to their questions. They also need information that clearly explains what has happened, why it has happened and what will be happening. We will strive to enable children to have their questions answered, through the PSHE curriculum, on an individual basis, working with parents and carers or through support services.
A	Appropriate response from schools and colleges Bereaved children need understanding and support from their teachers and fellow students without having to ask for it. We will provide training to ensure this happens.
V	Voice in important decisions We will work with families to encourage them to involve bereaved children in important decisions that have an impact on their lives such as planning the funeral and remembering anniversaries.
E	Enjoyment We will support the bereaved child's right to enjoy their lives even though someone important has died.
M	Meet others We will try where possible to enable bereaved children to benefit from the opportunity to meet other children who have had similar experiences.
E	Established routines We will endeavour, whenever possible, to enable bereaved children to continue activities and interests so that parts of their lives can still feel 'normal'.
N	Not to blame We will help bereaved children to understand that they are not responsible, and not to blame, for the death.
T	Tell the story We will encourage bereaved children to tell an accurate and coherent story of what has happened. We know this is helpful to them particularly if these stories are heard by those important people in their lives.

Safeguarding, confidentiality and recording

We follow our school's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that the welfare of the child remains paramount throughout, and that all children are protected from harm.

It is important to maintain professional confidentiality throughout the handling of any incident or disclosure. However, pupils will need to be made aware that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

To retain the trust of pupils and parents and carers, we will ensure that the sharing of appropriate information is kept to a minimum. Sensitive information will only be disclosed with careful attention to the rights and needs of individuals and in line with general data protection regulation.

If a child is suffering from trauma, we will share this as appropriate with staff, but not necessarily the details of their experience.

We will discuss with the bereaved child and their family which adults in the school community they would like made aware of the experiences impacting on the child.

We will use our school safeguarding system, *CPOMS*, to record when a child has experienced a close bereavement, is at risk of suicide or has made a suicide attempt.

Roles and responsibilities in dealing with bereavement

The role of the Governing Body is to:

- approve the bereavement policy and ensure its implementation
- ensure the policy is reviewed every three years or when national or local policy directs a change
- ensure that appropriate attention is given to how bereavement issues are addressed within the curriculum
- ensure that approaches to bereavement are respectful of religious and cultural values and beliefs
- ensure that staff are given appropriate opportunities for training, reflection and access to support if they need it.

The role of the Head teacher, Senior Leadership Team and Pastoral Lead is to:

- lead a whole-school approach to the effective management of loss and bereavement including ensuring appropriate training and support provided for staff
- contact the local authority/ Schools Advisory Service in the case of a sudden and unexpected death or suicide – key professionals would be expected to be involved – e.g. link Educational Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker, alongside relevant colleagues and managers
- be the first point of contact for family/child/staff directly affected by a bereavement
- record bereavements affecting children
- designate liaison and support to other trained members of staff, when appropriate
- monitor progress in supporting those impacted by a bereavement and liaise with external agencies
- provide individual support as and when needed and in consultation with the head teacher and pastoral team
- keep the governing body appropriately informed
- deal with media enquiries

The role of all staff in our school is to:

- access bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff, if appropriate
- know how to access support for themselves, for other staff and for the family, if advice or information is needed
- know how to report a concern if the bereavement or sudden and unexpected death has placed a child at significant risk of harm
- know how to support a child when they are distressed and how to refer to specialist support if needed
- have a basic understanding of a child's needs when facing loss and change
- teach about loss and bereavement as part of the planned curriculum
- inform the head teacher at the earliest possibility if they hear about a death of someone in the school community

Our Pastoral Lead (Chris Lawson) has had more advanced training about bereavement. They can offer professional support to other pupils and members of staff.

Procedures for the death of a member of a child's family/ death of a child or adult in the school community

Pre-bereavement

In some situations, it is known in advance that a death is going to occur. This is usually because of a long illness. In cases where this is an adult within the school community, individual conversations will be held with the Headteacher in terms of support, information exchange and practical considerations.

When the expected death is of a child or a member of a child's family we will:

- contact the family to confirm factual information and explore what support could be provided to them
- identify the key point of contact, Headteacher, in school in terms of information exchange and to update when things change
- ensure that all relevant adults are clear about what information has and needs to be shared with the pupil
- keep lines of communication open to ensure that all information is received in a timely fashion
- explore the possibility of signposting to other organisations such as Winston's Wish or a local hospice
- look to involve faith or community leaders when appropriate and with the agreement of the family
- explore what support for the pupils affected might look like in practice
- arrange training for specific members of staff to ensure all involved are confident in their ability to support the pupil
- if appropriate, consider and reflect on how to communicate with the wider school community for example the pupil's class mates
- if appropriate, begin conversations around practical considerations in the events leading up to the death and following the death

Following a bereavement

We will consider each individual situation carefully to ensure that the response from the school is sensitive, accurately reflects the gravity of the situation, and involves those affected as appropriate. We also recognise that supporting a community, or bereaved child may be for many months/ years. As a result, we will look to support the community/ individuals in line with our Mental Health and Wellbeing policies as well as considering the content below.

As an immediate response we will:

- contact the deceased's family with the aim to establish the facts and avoid rumours (Headteacher/ Pastoral Lead)
- consider any religious beliefs that may affect the timing of the funeral or impact on other aspects of the bereavement process
- find out, if possible, how the family would like the information to be managed by the school
- notify Pastoral Lead who will be the key point of support for the affected child/ children and ensure there is support in place for the staff members if required
- send letters or cards of condolence to families or individuals directly affected
- inform staff of the death before pupils are informed, recognising that some pupils may have found out through other means. Where possible, staff will be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways to make sure all staff have the same version of the event. Where this has not been possible, staff will be supported to share the information including a 'script' for clarity of the message.
- Consider anyone absent at the time – pupils/ staff – those part-time or on maternity.
- inform pupils who are most directly affected (such as a friendship group), preferably in small groups, by someone known to them and in keeping with the wishes of the family and expertise of the school
- inform the wider school community in line with the wishes of the family through assemblies and /or letters to parents.
- make small changes to the school timetable to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of the child or children affected by the situation. However, we will aim for minimal disruption to the timetable as this can offer a sense of security and familiarity.

For the funeral we will:

- find out the family's wishes and follow these in terms of the involvement of members of the school community (or not)
- identify which staff and pupils may want to attend if invited by the family and the practicalities associated.
- organise tributes such as flowers or a collection in line with family wishes and the wishes of staff and pupils
- be sensitive to religious and cultural issues.

After the funeral we will:

- consider whether it is appropriate to visit the child and family affected at home and plan a return to school
- ensure friendships are secure – peer support can be particularly important for a bereaved child or young person
- continue regular contact with the family and show we still care about them and their child over time
- monitor the emotional needs of staff and pupils and provide listening time and ongoing appropriate support
- where a child in the class has died consider their belongings, books, seat, classroom layout to not highlight they have 'gone' pictures. Decide how to manage this sensitively – the intention is must not be to pretend they were never there.
- consider practical issues and make thoughtful and sensitive updates to parental and other contact details when needed
- continue to assess the needs of children most affected, and record and plan for support accordingly
- Provide time for prayer and reflection.

Longer term we will:

- be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life. So, we will record information and share with relevant people, particularly at transition points. This could include ensuring significant dates and events for the child are recorded and shared with appropriate staff for future reference.
- Ensure appropriate and timely pastoral support is offered, in line with our Pupil Mental Health and Wellbeing policy.
- signpost families to bereavement support including that provided by Winston's Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/about-us/>
- ensure that learning about loss and bereavement is embedded into appropriate curriculum areas including PSHE education. When teaching about loss and bereavement we will give careful thought as to how to support those directly affected by loss and bereavement.

Following a sudden and unexpected death – suicide

NOTE: using phrases such as 'committed suicide' or 'successful/ unsuccessful/failed attempt suicide' **are never appropriate** and often cause additional upset. Use phrases like: 'died by suicide'; 'ended his/ her/ their life' and saying 'attempted to end his/ her/ their life'.

Suicide is not just a difficult event to deal with, it also presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide. We will seek advice from the local authority, Schools Advisory Service and Winston's Wish. As a school community we will make a response to a sudden death in as timely manner as appropriate. It is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

In the case of suicide, we will refer to The Samaritans Step by Step Guide.
<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/step-step/>.

Consideration will be taken as to if the death by suicide occurred within the family and may not impact as widely on the school community.

Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of a sudden and unexpected death in the school community will depend on the age of the pupils but should be based on and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours)
- an understanding that death is permanent
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to sudden and unexpected death – expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help
- an understanding of expectations around funerals.

When discussing any suicide that has occurred, we will ensure that the information given is age appropriate and:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death
- does not include details of any suicide note
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicid

Following a sudden and unexpected death – homicide

The Childhood Bereavement Network and Winston’s Wish estimate that around one child every day is bereaved of a parent or sibling through murder or manslaughter in Great Britain.

Children may experience profound and lasting shock, enormous anger at what has happened, rage at the person who caused their relative to die, deep fear at the perceived insecurity of the world around them. Sadly, in many cases, the person who caused the death is also known to the child, resulting in great confusion and a double loss, for example, if one parent kills the other and is then imprisoned. In some families, the child may have to move to a new house, school, area – away from familiar and comforting places and routines.

The school will take an honest and consistent age-appropriate approach to talking with children about what has happened. It is not possible to shield them from what has happened completely. Winston’s Wish can provide support to families bereaved in this way and further information can be found on their website: <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide/>

Equality and inclusion, values and beliefs

We recognise that there is a range of cultural and religious beliefs, customs and procedures concerning death. It follows that bereaved children and families may have differing expectations. Some of these may affect matters of school organisation. We will source training and guidance to develop our understanding of the range of beliefs to best support pupils.

We will present a balance of different approaches to death and loss. We will make **pupils** aware of differing responses to bereavement, and that we need to value and respect each one of these.

Young asylum seekers and refugees

Many young asylum seekers and refugees have experienced the death of family members or friends, often in traumatic circumstances. This, and further traumatic experiences and losses, can have a devastating effect on their emotional and physical health, behaviour, learning and relationships.

Sudden traumatic death complicates the process of grief and mourning, as usual ways of coping may be overwhelmed. We will consult specialist mental health services where appropriate.

Supporting staff

Support for bereaved staff

We are aware that staff also experience bereavement. When this happens, we will ensure they are provided with support to take care of themselves, and to know where they can go for additional help should they need it. This could include: their GP; Cruse Bereavement Care <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>; or staff counselling, information and advice through staff insurance policies.

We will work within our Staff Wellbeing and Leave of Absence policy, and if necessary, with the council or insurance’s occupational health team to ensure staff are provided with appropriate leave and support at a time of bereavement.

Teachers who are dealing with their own bereavement are encouraged to speak with their line manager about any areas of the curriculum which they feel uncomfortable to teach or want support to teach.

Parbold Douglas CE Academy

Bereavement Policy [Last updated: February 2024]

Staff training

We will ensure that regular training is provided to staff to support staff in meeting their roles and responsibilities as identified in this policy. Winston's Wish offers [training courses](#) and also a [free online training course for school staff](#).

Curriculum

Teachers are likely in their day-to-day interactions to come across/ bring up the topic of death – this may be planned or unplanned. Opportunities can arise in books read, including the class reads at the end of the day.

Children and young people explore the concept of loss, bereavement, and grief as part of the statutory elements of our PSHE curriculum. It is also addressed through cross-curricular opportunities such as body changes or life cycles in Science, as well as through art, literacy, and religious education.

We also use assemblies to address aspects of death – such as Remembrance Day, Holocaust Memorial Day or commemorative occasions. We also observe national minutes of silence and explain the purpose of this.

When appropriate, we respond to a tragedy or serious incident by discussing this in class having discussed as a staff team the language we will use to respond to the incident.

Teachers are provided with training on how to deliver this sensitive area of the curriculum within a safe, learning environment. We also point parents and carers towards appropriate advice on how to talk to their children about these events when necessary.

We will answer any questions relating to loss or death in a sensitive, age-appropriate, honest and factual way. Children and young people will not be expected to disclose any personal experiences but will be signposted to support if they want it.

We give children opportunities to learn about and discuss cultural and religious issues around death and encourage them to express their own responses and feelings.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

The next date for review is **February 2027**.

Appendix 1: Steps for Informing Staff of a Bereavement in the Community

The following guidelines may help when informing staff and governors:

- Arrange a staff meeting as soon as practicable. Identify absent staff.
- If a death has occurred in a holiday period make sure that all staff are informed.
- Tell the story of what happened leading up to the death.
- Give a factual explanation of how the death occurred.
- Be prepared for obvious upset and feelings of anger/guilt. People may connect the incident to their own personal experience of bereavement, so feelings about past bereavements may need to be discussed. This is perfectly natural.
- To enable absent staff to feel part of a caring team, arrangements should be made to inform them over the telephone if a personal visit is impractical. Consider the relationship between the absent colleague and deceased.
- For a death that may attract media coverage (e.g. if the member of staff was a well-known personality or died tragically), identify a nominated spokesperson (e.g. Headteacher/ Chair of Governors) to provide a 'news statement' at an agreed time, as a way of dealing with media intrusion. Liaison with the individual's family is essential, prior to reporting information to the media, in order to respect their privacy and wishes.
- Establish good lines of communication with all relevant parties, this will always include family and staff, in other cases it may involve communication with emergency services, health, the Educational Psychology service, Social Care, and other support services.
- Provide details of someone who can be available to talk things through with a member of staff, parent or child if they are finding the situation particularly hard. This person could advise the family of support services available if required.
- Nominate staff to prepare a letter to parents and carers, example letters are in the 'informing parents' section at the end of this document.
- Provide staff with a script about what has happened so that consistent information is given to all of the pupils.
- Include where possible some answers to difficult questions that staff may be asked by the children, to prevent them needing to think of appropriate responses on the spot.
- Encourage everyone to consider how to meet their own support needs and take care of themselves, this may be from friends, family, support services and/or buddying up with other members of staff. Provide contact details for support in your local area.
- Be confident enough to go with your gut instinct. Remember that keeping people as informed as possible is always helpful, and don't bear all the responsibility yourself, share it round.
- Trained and experienced practitioners are available on the Winston's Wish Freephone National Helpline (08088 020 021) should you want to check out ideas throughout the day.

Appendix 2: Steps for Informing Pupils of a Bereavement in the Community

The following guidelines will help you to inform children of the death of a teacher /other member of staff or child:

- Identify those children who had a long-term and/or close relationship with the deceased to be told together as a separate group. Where possible inform all the pupils in the smallest group practicable.
- Take account of pupils with specific needs including: pupils with past history of loss; pupils with a learning disability and pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions or behaviour.
- Experience has shown that it is more beneficial if all pupils are informed.
- It is always a shock when a death occurs in a school even if it may have been anticipated. In the eyes of the pupils, teachers are part of the fittings and fixtures in school and are not expected to die. Children expect to live forever, and so a fellow pupil dying whilst still young enough to attend school can also feel quite shocking.
- Provide staff with guidelines on how to inform children. For example:
 - “I’ve got some really sad news to tell you today that might upset you. I know most of you will have heard of cancer, and know that sometimes people with cancer get better, but other times people die from it. _____ has been ill with cancer for a long time. I have to tell you that _____ died yesterday in hospital”.
 - “Sometimes people have accidents at work, at home, at school or on the road. People may be hurt or injured in the accident and they may have to go to hospital for treatment. Sadly, there are some accidents that cause people to die. I have some really sad news to tell you that might upset you. Yesterday _____, who is in Year 4, was in an accident and he was so badly injured that he died”.
- Refer to the person’s name naturally, “Mrs Smith died from cancer”.
- Children and young people will appreciate time to verbalise their feelings and fears. Allow space for “If only’s...” to be acknowledged.
- Discussion – allow pupils to share their own experiences of death, eg. “When my pet/my gran died” etc.
- Be honest about your own feelings and experiences, and talk openly about the relationship that you had with the person.
- Answer pupil’s questions factually. Avoid using euphemisms like ‘passed away’, or ‘lost’ etc. Use the words dead, died and death to avoid confusion for children.
- Be prepared for children to say or do the unexpected, experience has shown some responses or apparent lack of response may be upsetting for adults. No apparent response does not mean that a child does not care.
- Plan and arrange how the school will collectively acknowledge the loss and remember the person, for instance with an assembly, memory book, and maybe in time a permanent memorial (garden, tree, bench, award...).
- It is natural that children may be upset and/or need time to process information, make sure there is a quiet space for them to go to, support available for them both immediately afterwards and in the days that follow.

Appendix 3

Children's understanding of death

Children and young people mature at different rates and their understanding and responses to bereavement are likely to be based as much on their experience of life as on their chronological age. The age categories given are guidelines only.

2-5 Years

Young children may be beginning to understand the concept of death, but do not appreciate its finality. Some may not appreciate the permanence of death: 'Shall we dig granny up now?' They think in literal and concrete terms and so will be confused by euphemisms for death such as 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep'. Children of this age may well require repeated explanations of what has happened. As their thinking is very much centred on themselves, they may consider that something they did or said caused the death. They are prone to fantasise at this age and if not told what is happening may dream up something scarier than reality.

5-8 Years

At about five years of age most children are beginning to realise that dead people are different from those who are alive, that they do not feel, they cannot hear, see, smell or speak and they do not need to eat or drink. At around seven years of age the majority of children accept that death is permanent and that it can happen to anyone. This can result in separation anxiety. They are better able to express their thoughts and feelings but may conceal them and outwardly appear unaffected. They need to be given an opportunity to ask questions and to be given as much information as possible to allow them to adjust. They are likely to be very interested in the rituals surrounding death.

8-12 Years

At this age children's understanding of death almost matches that of an adult, although they find it difficult to grasp abstract concepts. An important factor is their deepening realisation of the inevitability of death and an increasing awareness of their own mortality. This can result in fear and insecurity. Their need-to-know details continues, and they will seek answers to very specific questions.

Adolescence

The struggle for independence at this age may cause bereaved teenagers to challenge the beliefs and expectations of others as to how they should be feeling or behaving. Death increases anxieties about the future, and they may question the meaning of life and experience depression. Teenagers may find it easier to discuss their feelings with a sympathetic friend or adult than with a close family member. They may be having difficulty coming to terms with their own mortality and that of those close to them; they may cope with this by refusing to contemplate the possibility of death by taking part in risk-taking behaviour. Anger makes up a large part of their grief, often compounded by a sense of injustice.

Parbold Douglas CE Academy

Bereavement Policy [Last updated: February 2024]

Appendix 4 – Letter Templates

The following letters can be used by the school depending on the circumstances of the bereavement.

Template of a Letter Informing Parents of the Death of a Member of Staff

Dear Parents and Carers

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the tragic death of <Name> who has been a teacher at this school for a number of years. Our thoughts and prayers are with <Name>'s family at this time and in an effort to try to respond to his/her death in a positive way, all the children have been informed. When someone dies, it is normal for family and friends to experience many different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion and children are likely to ask questions about the death which need to be answered honestly and factually in terms that they will understand.

The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try and answer their questions at school, but if there is anything else you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact us.

<Clergy Name> has been in school and will continue to offer spiritual support to children, families and staff. We remember <Name> and all the bereaved in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely

<Name>

Headteacher

Template of a Letter Informing Parents of the Death of a Pupil

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from that pupil's parents. The contents of the letter and the distribution list need to be agreed by the parents and school.

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>. <Name> died from an illness called <name of illness.> As you may be aware, many children who have <name of illness> get better, but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school, but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name...>'s life.

<Clergy Name> has been in school and will continue to offer spiritual support to children, families and staff. We remember <Name> and all the bereaved in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Parbold Douglas CE Academy

Bereavement Policy [Last updated: February 2024]

Template of a Letter Informing Parents of the Sudden Death of a Pupil

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher had the sad task of informing the children of the sudden death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>. He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies, it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name...>'s life.

<Clergy Name> has been in school and will continue to offer spiritual support to children, families and staff. We remember <Name> and all the bereaved in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely
Headteacher

Appendix 5 – Guidance to Parents and Carers

Most children and young people affected by a death just need adults who care about them. You cannot take away their sadness, but you can acknowledge it and support them through the experience. Reactions will vary. If they were not close to the person who died, they may be unaffected. However, it is best not to make assumptions. Any death may make children and young people anxious, as they become more aware of their own mortality and that of those around them.

Questions are healthy, as is curiosity. A good approach with any age is to acknowledge what has happened and then answer questions as they arise. Having accurate information will enable you to answer questions with facts rather than rumour; try to obtain this from a reliable source so that information is both accurate and sensitive to the wishes of the bereaved family.

Young children often do not have adult inhibitions surrounding death and you may be taken aback by some of their comments and reactions. It is not unusual for them to act out funerals or play at being dead. It is their way of trying to make sense of what has happened. Teenagers may become withdrawn and difficult to engage with. Respect their need for personal space whilst gently reminding them that you are there if they need you.

Children often have a surprising capacity to deal with the truth, if given information in simple, straightforward language, appropriate for their age and understanding. Young children tend to make up what they do not know, and their imaginings are often worse than the reality.

Adolescents and teenagers will resent a lack of honesty in the adults around them and the resultant loss of trust will be difficult to regain. Maintain routines, such as going to school. Familiar situations and contact with friends brings security and a sense of normality. Continue to expect the usual rules of behaviour. Normality with love and compassion is what to aim for. Do not think that you have to hide your own sadness. Seeing adults expressing emotion can give a child of any age 'permission' to do the same, if they feel they want to. Hearing how you are feeling may help them to consider their own feelings. Be ready to listen but don't expect your child to always want to talk. They usually will when ready, and often to people who are not immediate family. One way to create opportunities for sharing thoughts and memories is with a joint activity. Young people especially, tend to talk when they do not feel under pressure to do so.

You may notice some of the following which are all normal as long as they do not continue for too long:

- Change in behaviour, perhaps becoming unnaturally quiet and withdrawn or unusually aggressive
- Anger is a common response at all ages and may be directed at people or events which have no connection to the death
- Disturbed sleep and bad dreams.
- Anxiety demonstrated by clingy behaviour and a reluctance to be separated from parents or carers. Older children may express this in more practical ways, for example by expressing concerns over issues that adults may perceive as insensitive or unimportant
- Being easily upset by events that would normally be trivial to them.
- Difficulty concentrating, being forgetful and generally 'not with it.' This makes school work particularly difficult and academic performance may suffer. Older children may feel that
- there is no point in working hard at school and they might lose a general sense of purpose in their lives.
- Physical complaints, such as headaches, stomach aches and a general tendency to be run down and prone to minor illness.

Grief is a natural and necessary response to a death. However, if concerned about your child, do not hesitate to seek advice

The Role of the School

When a child or young person experiences the death of someone important to them, they not only need to adapt to living with their grief within the family home, but also to the challenges of a changed life in the outside world. This will include school. Children spend a large proportion of their time at nursery and school and their social life is often centred on friends made there. Therefore, the way their school or college responds is very important to them.

The response works best when they are consulted and involved in any decisions that may affect them. This could be something as simple as arranging for a child to arrive ten minutes after everyone else, giving her teacher time to talk to the class.

Support for your child will be most effective if everybody works together so never feel that you are 'making a fuss'.

You can expect a caring response, one which is underpinned by the school's Christian vision and ethos. Even though some staff may not be sure what to say and may feel a little out of their depth, be assured that they will be given the support that they need to help you in any way they can. The school will have access to resources and organisations that will ensure that they offer you and your child the highest quality support and guidance possible.

What school can offer a grieving child just by carrying on with normal daily routines. Some children feel that in order to protect immediate family from further upset, they sometimes find it easier to talk to someone not directly involved, such as a familiar and trusted teacher. They feel that going to school gives a sense of normality, and many choose to return immediately after a death has occurred for this reason. Others need to take a few days off, but the longer they are away, the harder it can be to return. When grieving, children of any age often view school as a place where they can have some time away from overwhelming emotions and sadness.

Communication with school is important so let the school know about the death as soon as you can. If this is too difficult for you to do, ask a friend to act as a messenger. Try to keep school aware of any arrangements, such as the date of the funeral. From then on, keep up communication. Let them know of any changed behaviour and of any particular concerns or anxieties your child may have concerning school.

Request that all staff know that your child is grieving, who they are grieving for, and when the death occurred. Some children are reluctant for this information to be given out but if everyone has the basic facts, this prevents insensitive remarks being made by teachers and others because they were unaware of what has happened. Certain lesson topics may bring back painful reminders of the circumstances surrounding the death. This unintended upset can cause real distress for your child and the member of staff concerned.

Supplementary Information Provided by Blackburn Diocese Bereavement Pack

Acts of Collective Worship, Prayer and Reflection

Special Acts of Collective Worship - saying 'goodbye'

Most schools feel that organising some sort of special act of collective worship or remembrance service after a death in a school community is a helpful thing to do. It can provide an opportunity for children to celebrate the life of the person who has died. It can also put back a sense of normality into what may have been a very unsettled time. Below are some ideas to help you organise something appropriate.

Why hold a special act of collective worship?

- To bring the school together to acknowledge what has happened in a manner that reflects the school's Christian ethos.
- To reflect on, remember and give thanks to God for the life of the person who has died
- To normalise and share grief in a way that reflects the school's as a caring Christian family
- To give the message that it is OK to be sad but equally OK to not be affected • To inform pupils and staff of any support that is available

Who should attend?

Anyone who wishes to be there: teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, any family who feel able to attend. Many families find comfort in other people organising something special and appreciate being there. Others may not wish to participate but should be given the opportunity to do so.

Who should be involved?

Anyone who wants to be. Pupils have produced some very moving acts of worship about friends who have died. It helps them to feel involved and gives a sense of doing something positive. Very young children will need greater amounts of adult input but can still participate in a way appropriate for their age and understanding.

How to structure a special act of collective worship

Have a clear beginning, middle and an end.

Begin the worship in the same way as you would other ones – Playing reflective but uplifting music can help to create the right atmosphere as can showing suitable images through a PowerPoint to set the mood, words of welcome or 'special' such as 'The lord be with you. And also, with you.', lighting candles with reference to welcoming God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Start by explaining the purpose and length of the collective worship. Follow with a brief reminder of the circumstances surrounding the death and when it happened. Explain that everyone is different, and some people will be more affected than others, but whether deeply sad, just a bit thoughtful, or anything in between, that is fine.

The middle section could include:

- Lighting a special remembrance candle
- A bible reading and explanation
- A poem chosen or written by pupils
- Pupils or staff taking it in turns to recount stories or memories.
- Photographs of the person or child who has died to give a visual reminder, but remember a large image can be too much for any grieving family attending.
- Placing objects associated with the person who has died into a special memory box. This can then be given to the family.

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- Talking about a memory tree or collage made by sticking a collection of drawings that pupils have created onto a large sheet of paper or onto a tree outline. This can be added to during the collective worship.
- Reading a story or a section from a suitable book.
- Favourite music / songs or poems of the person who has died.
- A hymn or song for everyone to sing
- Reflection time accompanied music and/or images to view on a screen or IWB.
- Prayers for everyone to share and ones that pupils have written.
- The end needs some thought and is better if it can leave everyone with a sense of looking forward. Some suggestions include:
 - Giving a memory book to the family.
 - Blowing out the remembrance candle.
- After leaving the collective worship, pupils who wish to, planting a bulb or plant to create a special memory garden.
- Asking pupils to bring a farewell prayer or message to the person who has died to put into a special box as they leave. This can help pupils to personalise a goodbye.
- Playing reflective but uplifting music can help to create the right atmosphere.
- Remind pupils of what support is available to them.

Afterwards

It is best to arrange the collective worship before a break or playtime. Pupils and staff will need space to reflect before carrying on with the normal school timetable. Some schools time it for the end of lessons but the build-up throughout the day can be difficult to handle. If arranged for the end of the school day, leave time for pupils to compose themselves before leaving for home. Be prepared for different responses; some pupils may be deeply affected, others not at all, or they may behave out of character. Ensure they all know where to go for support if required.

Poetry

The following poems may provide useful discussion points and comfort. They may also provide inspiration for poetry writing in school linked to the death of adults and children.

Death Is Nothing at All

“Death is nothing at all.

I have only slipped away into the next room.

Nothing has happened. Everything remains exactly as it was.

I am I and you are you,

And the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by my old familiar name; speak to me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference in your tone; wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was,

Let it be spoken without effort, without the trace of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same as it ever was; there is absolute and unbroken continuity.

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am waiting for you, for an interval,

Somewhere very near, just around the corner.

All is well. Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.

One brief moment and all will be as it was before”

What Is Dying?

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A ship sails and I stand watching till s/he fades on the horizon and someone at my side says, "S/he is gone."

Gone where?

Gone from my sight, that is all; s/he is just as large as when I saw her/him.

The diminished size and total loss of sight is in me, not in her/him and just at the moment when someone at my side says, "S/he is gone,"

There are others who are watching her/him coming and other voices take up a glad shout, "There s/he comes!"

And that is dying.

Everlasting Life

When death walks by with quiet tread

To touch a loved one who's then led

Away from sleep, away from pain,

To wake in joy to live again.

You'll hear him/her on a whispered breeze,

A calling bird; in swaying trees.

Do not weep long, but lift your eyes,

You'll see his/her glory in God's skies.

He/she'll be there in a swallow's flight,

His/her eyes in stars on a velvet night.

His/her courage strong in every tree,

His/her name carved well for eternity.

Hide not your love within your heart,

For he/she will always be a part

Of you and everything you do,

For death is nought, when love is true.

Lynn New

When a Loved One's Gone

Those we love, remain with us,

For love itself lives on.

And cherished memories never fade because a loved one's gone.

Those we love can never be more than a thought apart.

For as long as there is memory they'll live on in the heart.

Anon.

Death hides, but it cannot divide.

Thou art but on Christ's other side. Thou with Christ and Christ with me

And so together still are we.

Anon.

Somewhere a journey begins at the end of the worldly existence we know,

Somewhere a path stretches over the stars and rivers of memories flow, Somewhere a silence is heard far away, and the brightness of day fills the night, Where the trials of life are resolved into peace when a soul

finds its way to the light. Anon.

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Prayers

Death of a Child

O Merciful God, your Son Jesus Christ took children in his arms and blessed them. We commit this child (name) to your care. We ask you to surround his / her parents and family with your love so that they are not overwhelmed by grief, but, supported by their family and friends, they might in due course rediscover meaning and hope.

Amen.

Marcus Braybrooke

Heavenly Father, at present we can only feel the loss of (name.) We want to be strong and we want to understand why s/he is no longer with us. We pray that (name) is safe in your arms, in your heavenly kingdom. Help us to remember what s/he meant to us and what s/he left behind – the laugh, the smile, the favourite comment, the things s/he struggled with. Bring us happy memories in the tears. Bring (name) the peace only you can give, Lord of love and mercy.

We ask this in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Rupert Bristow

Heavenly Father,

We give thanks for the life of ; for the smiles, the fun and the friendships s/he brought to our lives.

Through our tears we ask, Lord, that as s/he is welcomed into your loving arms s/he also stays in our hearts.

S/he will always be special to school and to Church.

Help us all, family, friends and community, to say farewell to ; but never to forget him/her.

We ask this in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Rupert Bristow

Death of a Headteacher / Teacher

Almighty God, you know that it will be difficult for us at (name) school without (name.) Bring us the strength and hope to carry on, as s/he would have wished.

We thank you, Lord, for the special gifts s/he brought to this school and shared with us.

May the church and the wider community give thanks for his/her contribution to the life of (name village / town) and may we redouble our own efforts to serve each other, in honour of his/her memory.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Rupert Bristow

Almighty God, as we remember all that (name) has meant to us at (name) school, we pray that s/he is now at peace with you in your eternal kingdom. Only you know why s/he was taken from us at this time, but we give thanks for his/her special place in our hearts at our school. We pray for his/her family and friends at this difficult time. Show your love for them and for us, as we struggle to cope with the loss. May your church be a comfort and strength to us all.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Rupert Bristow

Prayer for a grieving family after a tragedy

Father,

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You hold time within your hands, and see it all, from beginning to end. Please keep and carry these precious people in their sadness and loss. Cover them with your great wings of love, give their weary hearts rest and their minds sound sleep. Lord, lift their eyes so that they may catch a glimpse of eternity, and be comforted by the promise of heaven.

We ask all this in the precious name of Jesus.

Amen.

Biblical quotes

The Bible explains the importance of God's words being passed on to children, from one generation of children to the next generation of children. In Psalm 78, the reason given for God's words to be passed on to children is so that the children "may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God."

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 reads, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way when you lie down, and when you rise up."

In Luke 8, the parable of the sower teaches us the importance of getting the Word into the heart. The seed is the Word of God. It's sown in the heart. And those who keep it will "bear fruit with patience." (Luke 8:15)

Here are 8 verses that can be 'sown' into the heart of a grieving child:

1. I am always with you. Psalm 73:23, NIV
2. God will wipe away every tear. Revelation 21:4, NKJV
3. I am the Lord your God. I am holding your right hand. Isaiah 41:13, ICB
4. You will feel safe because there is hope. Job 11:18, ICB
5. He heals the broken-hearted. Psalm 147:3, NKJV
6. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Corinthians 15:26, ESV 7. God will yet fill your mouth with laughter. Job 8:21, ICB
8. The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. Hebrews 13:
9. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. Corinthians 13:7-8

The following biblical text may also be useful when planning acts of worship, acknowledging the loss of someone special and reaffirming faith in Jesus Christ.

1. Romans 6:4

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

2. Philippians 3:20-21

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

3. Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

4. Romans 8:38-39

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For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. John 14:1-3

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

6. Psalm 34:18

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

7. Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

8. Thessalonians 4:13-14

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

9. John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

10. Corinthians 5:1

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

11. Romans 14:8

For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.

12. John 10:27-29

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

13. Psalm 34:4-5

I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

14. Psalm 46:1-2

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.

15. Corinthians 15:54-56

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

16. John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

17. Proverbs 12:28

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In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway, there is no death.

18. Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

19. Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance...

20. Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Songs and Hymns

No one can ever completely comfort a child or an adult who is grieving. Neither can any song ever take away the pain, but perhaps they can make them reflect on their life, give a little comfort and, for the believer, assure them that they have hope of seeing them again. Music can have a soothing effect no matter what a child's or young person's religious beliefs.

Traditional

- I watch the sunrise
- The day thou gavest, Lord has ended
- Morning has broken
- Abba Father
- The Lords' my Shepherd
- There is a Redeemer
- How Great Thou Art
- Be Still
- Kumbaya
- Jesus Name Above All Names
- Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God
- Be Still

Fischy Music Songs

- In a deep, deep place
- Part of Your Plan
- As We Go Now
- Bad Times Won't Last
- Precious Memories
- Bring it All To Me
- My Old Friend
- Dreaming

Contemporary

The following songs can be found on the internet and can either be sung or simply used to reflect on as part of an act of worship. They are songs of hope and encouragement, helping those grieving to be assured that God is with them even through the toughest times.

- How deep the Father's Love - Stuart Townsend
- In Christ Alone - Stuart Townsend
- Cornerstone - Hillsong
- Messiah / You're Beautiful – Phil Wickman
- I can only imagine – Bart Millard
- Save a Place for Me – Matthew West
- Heaven Song – Phil Wickman
- I will rise – Chris Tomlin
- Dancing with Angels – Monk & Neagle
- Lord, I need You – Matt Maher
- Here I am to Worship – Hillsong
- With all I am – Hillsong
- God's Will - Martina McBride
- Over the Rainbow - Judy Garland
- One More Day- Diamond Rio
- When the River Meets the Sea- John Denver
- Borrowed Angels - Kristin Chenoweth

Section 4

Resources about death and bereavement for children and adults

Additional support and links

A Child of Mine: Supporting bereaved parents to cope with the loss of a baby or child and advocating for improved bereavement care for parents and families who have lost a child. Website: www.achildofmine.org.uk

Alliance of Hope for Suicide Loss Survivors: An online forum for people coping with the grief of losing a loved one to suicide. Website: www.allianceofhope.org

Barnardo's Child Bereavement: Charity dedicated to the support of bereaved children and young people, based in Northern Ireland but offering support via telephone and email across the UK.

Brake: A road safety helpline offering grief support to families and individuals who have been bereaved through road accidents. Website: www.brake.org.uk

Care for the Family: A Christian charity that provides parenting, relationship and bereavement support through events, resources, courses, training and volunteer networks. Website: www.careforthefamily.org.uk Helpline: 02920810800

Child Bereavement UK: Supporting children who are coping with bereavement, as well as families facing the death of a child. Help and advice for schools available on the website, by telephone or via regional support services.

The Child Death Helpline: This grief helpline supports anyone who has lost a child. Website: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk Helpline: 0800 282 986

Compassionate Friends: A bereavement charity dedicated to supporting parents, siblings and grandparents after the loss of a child, no matter how long ago. Website: www.tcf.org.uk Helpline: 0345 123 2304

Cruse Bereavement Care: Offering grief support and information for anyone who has lost a loved one. Website: www.cruse.org.uk Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Grief Encounter: Helping children through bereavement Website: www.griefencounter.org.uk Helpline: 020 8371 8455

Hope Again: A website for young people from Cruse Bereavement Care providing young people with a platform to share stories and find ways to cope with grief. Website: www.hopeagain.org.uk Helpline: 0808 808 1677

The Lullaby Trust: The Lullaby Trust offers a helpline, support and peer-to-peer networks for anyone affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child. It also provides advice to promote safer sleep and backs research into preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Website: lullabytrust.org.uk Helpline: 0808 802 6868

Marie Curie Cancer Care: Marie Curie works with the family and friends who have been bereaved with a range of resources to help them cope emotionally as well as handle the practical side of losing someone close to them. Website: www.mariecurie.org.uk Helpline: 0800 090 2309

RipRap: Supporting teenagers whose parents have cancer Website: riprap.org.uk

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Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM): This charity supports families bereaved by manslaughter or murder with a helpline, bereavement retreats and seminars. Website: www.samm.org.uk
Helpline: 0121 451 1618 or 0845 872 3440

Scotty's Little Soldiers: A military charity dedicated to supporting children who have lost a parent in the Armed Forces. Website: scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk Helpline: 0800 092 8571

Books to Support Bereavement

The following books are available through Winston's Wish website

A Child's Grief	Practical ideas and suggestions
As Big as it Gets	Suggestions for support for parents and adults
Beyond the Rough Rock	Support for children who have been bereaved through suicide
Hope beyond the headlines	Support for bereavement through murder or manslaughter
Milly's Bug Hunt	Story Book for families
Muddles, Puddles and Sunshine	Activity book for children
Never too Young to Grieve	Support for children under 5 following the death of a parent
Out of the Blue	Making memories last when someone has dies (teenagers)
The Family has been Informed	Support for military families
The Secret	Straight talking about cancer – supporting parents talking about cancer to younger family members
You Just Don't Understand	Supporting bereaved teenagers

Stories and Information Books

Some of the following books have a very clear Christian message, others can be used to deliver one.

Title	Author A-Z	Age Group
Tell me about heaven, Grandpa Rabbit	Jenny Album	4-8
Heaven for Kids	Randy Alcorn	8-12
Tell me about Heaven	Randy Alcorn	6-10
There's a Party in Heaven	Gary Bower	4-8
What happened when Grandmas died?	Peggy Barker	4-8
Jesus Still Loves Joe: About a child Whose Sister Has Died	Victoria Beech	All
- Held in Hope series	Elizabeth B. Brown	Adults
Surviving the Loss of a Child - Support for Grieving Parents		

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Talking About Death and Bereavement in School - How to Help Children Aged 4 to 11 to feel Supported and Understood Amy and Tom -a series of books which are a tool for bereaved primary school children and distributed free to family liaison officers, schools, bereaved families and medical professionals across the country Missing Mummy	Ann Chadwick CHUMS – Child Bereavement, Trauma and Emotional Wellbeing Service www.amyandtom.org Rebecca Cobb	4-11 7-16 4-8
Always and Forever	Alan Durant	4-8
The Grieving Child: A Parent's Guide – practical, compassionate advice for helping a child (preschool to teenagers) cope with the death of a parent or other loved one in a variety of circumstances. The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and Their Friends	Helen Fitzgerald Helen Fitzgerald	Adults Teenagers
No Matter What Straight Talk About Death for Teenagers: How to Cope with Losing Someone You Love	Debi Giori Earl A. Grollman	
Someone I Loved Died Tapestry - Grandma Sews a Picture of Hope The Lonely Tree	H Christine Harder Tangvald Bob Hartman Nicholas Halliday	4-8 4-11 4-8
The Secret Garden – 2 children coping with the death of their parents in different ways When Someone Very Special Dies: A practical format for allowing children to understand the concept of death and develop coping skills for life, this book is designed for young readers to illustrate. Grandad – a story to help children cope positively with bereavement	Frances Hodgson Burnett Marge Heegaard Sarah Hewitt	 4-11
Josh - Coming to terms with the death of a Friend	Stephanie Jeffs and Jacqui Thomas	4-11
Amazing Questions Kids Ask About Heaven and Angels Someday Heaven Goodnight Mister Tom Finding a Way Through When Someone Close Has Died: What it Feels Like and What You Can Do to Help Yourself: A Workbook by Young People for Young People 'Til We Meet Again	Multiple authors Wayne McLaughlin Michael Magorian Pat Mood & Lesley Whittaker Julie Muller & Camryn Cox	7-12 4-8 8 – 16 11-18 4-11
What happens when we die? A Monster Calls– a young person desperately trying to cope with his mother’s approaching death.	Carolyn Nystrom Patrick Ness	4-8 11-adults

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Children and Grief: Helping Your Child Understand Death	Joey O'Connor	Adults
Are You Sad, Little Bear? - A Book About learning to Say Goodbye Sad Book	Rachel Rivett Michael Rosen	4-11 All
Waterbugs and Dragonflies – Explaining Death to Young Children We Were Gonna Have a Baby, But We Had An Angel Instead	Doris Stickney Pat Schwiebery	All All
The Memory Tree Little Pilgrim's Progress God Gave Us Heaven	Britta Teckentrup Helen L. Taylor Lisa Tawn Bergren	6-12 6-12 4-8
Badger's Parting Gifts	Susan Varley	4-11
The Velveteen Rabbit Charlotte's Web Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas - Simple Tips for Understanding and Expressing Your Grief	Margery Williams EB White Alan D. Wolfelt	4-8 6-12 Teenagers

Section 5

Different Cultures and Beliefs¹

Schools have to function within an increasingly multi-cultural society, in which various beliefs, religious and non-religious, require to be taken into account. Respect for the differing needs, rituals and practices is essential when acknowledging a death. It is this diversity that enriches our lives.

General points for Eastern Faiths: Within a faith there are often many variations and it is wrong to be prescriptive- beliefs can be moderated by life in a Western Culture. This is especially so for the younger generation, who may find it difficult to fit in with the stricter requirements of older members of a family or community. Families tend to be much more involved in preparing the body and the funeral arrangements than in Christian faiths. Because of belief in an afterlife, it is important that the whole body is retained. Post-mortems therefore tend to be viewed as unwelcome procedures. The coffin is likely to be kept at home until the funeral and may well be open. All who wish to pay their respects will be very welcome.

The following descriptions merely give an overview of the major religions and belief systems that are found in the UK.

Islam

Muslims believe in life after death when, on the Last Day, the dead will come back to life to be judged by Allah. The good will reside in Paradise, the damned in Hell. Muhammad teaches that all men and women are to serve Allah and that they should try to live perfectly, following the Qur'an. Devout Muslims believe that death is a part of Allah's plan and open expressions of grief may be viewed as disrespectful to this belief.

As cremation is forbidden, Muslims are always buried, ideally within 24 hours of the death. Ritual washing is usually performed by the family or close friends at the undertakers or mortuary. They will wrap the body in a clean cloth or shroud. The coffin is often very plain as traditionally one would not be used. The grave is aligned to enable the head of the deceased to be placed facing the holy city of Mecca. Muslim graves are unmarked but to meet UK requirements, a simple headstone is used as a compromise.

There is an official mourning period of three days when the family will remain at home and be brought food by friends and relatives. For forty days after the funeral relatives may wish to make regular visits to the grave on Fridays.

Hinduism

Hindus believe in reincarnation and a cycle of rebirths. When a person dies, the soul is reborn in a new body, returning to earth in either a better or worse form. What a person does in this life will influence what happens to them in the next, the law of Karma. Those that have performed good deeds in this life will be reborn into higher order families, those whose behaviour has been bad will be born again as outcasts.

A Hindu funeral is as much a celebration as a remembrance service. Hindus cremate their dead as it is the soul that has importance, not the body which is no longer needed. White is the traditional colour and mourners usually wear traditional Indian garments. If attending, it may be worth asking what appropriate dress will be. During the service, offerings such as flowers or sweetmeats may be passed around and bells rung so noise is a part of the ritual. The chief mourner, usually the eldest son, and other male members of the family, may shave their heads as a mark of respect. In India, the chief mourner would light the funeral pyre. Here, he will press the button to make the coffin disappear and, in some instances, may be permitted to ignite the cremator. Ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered on the River Ganges. In the UK, some areas of water have been designated as acceptable substitutes.

The mourning period lasts between two and five weeks.

Sikhism

Sikhs believe the soul goes through a cycle of rebirths, with the ultimate objective being to reach perfection, to be reunited with God and, as a result, break the cycle. Thus, death holds no fear and mourning is done discretely. The present life is influenced by what happened in previous ones and the current life will set the scene for the next.

The deceased is cremated as soon as possible after death. The coffin is taken to the family home where it is left open for friends and family to pay their respects. It is then taken to the Gurdwara where hymns and prayers are sung. A short service follows at a crematorium, during which the eldest son presses the button for the coffin to move behind the curtain. In India, the eldest son would light the funeral pyre and no coffin would be used. After the funeral, a meal may be held at the Gurdwara. The ashes may be taken back to India to be scattered. Here they may be sprinkled in the sea or river.

The family remain in mourning for several days after the funeral and may listen to readings from the Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book).

Parbold Douglas CE Academy

Bereavement Policy [Last updated: February 2024]

Buddhism

Buddhists believe that nothing that exists is permanent and everything will ultimately cease to be. There is a belief in rebirth but not of a soul passing from one body to another. The rebirth is more a state of constantly changing being rather than a clear-cut reincarnation. The ultimate objective is to achieve a state of perfect peace and freedom. Buddhists try to approach death with great calmness, and an open-minded attitude of acceptance. There are few formal traditions relating to funerals and they tend to be seen as nonreligious events. Cremation is the generally accepted practice and the service is kept very simple. It may be conducted by a Buddhist monk or sometimes family members.

Judaism

Jewish people believe that they are judged once they die. This judgment by God will determine whether they will be compensated and go to a higher state of being known as The World to Come. There are four different types of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform.

According to Jewish traditions the person who has died should be buried as soon as possible – usually within 24 hours after death. When it comes to cremation, the different movements of Judaism differ in their views. At the same time, autopsies are forbidden, as it is considered to be a desecration of the body. Autopsies can be conducted, however, if it is legally requested, but even then, a rabbi should be present during the procedure. Embalming is widely prohibited by Judaism. Immediately after death, the Dayan Ha’Emet prayer is recited and a shomer, or guardian, is assigned to tend to the body from the moment of death until burial. The loved one is then washed and purified by members of the chevra kadisha who are of the same sex as the person who has passed. They dress the body in a plain white shroud of linen or muslin. If the loved one is male, he may also be buried in a religious skullcap, called a kippah or yarmulke, and a prayer shawl, called a tallit or tallis. A Jewish coffin is usually quite simple, made of pine and is metal-free so it is completely biodegradable. Once placed in the coffin, the body will not be seen. One Jewish funeral custom that may be observed is of the mourners ripping off pieces of material from their own clothes. This ritual is a demonstration of their grief, with the visibly torn garment traditionally being worn for the week following the death. The funeral service is usually held at a synagogue, a funeral home or a gravesite and can take anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes. Mourners can expect a Jewish funeral service to start with a eulogy read by the rabbi, leading to various prayers, psalms and hymns. When the funeral service is finished, the mourners should follow the hearse to the place of burial. After a Jewish funeral, a reception is usually hosted at the synagogue or at the bereaved family’s home, where a consolation meal is prepared by friends or members of the congregation.

Jewish mourning periods are traditionally structured into two parts. The first takes place over the seven days immediately after the funeral. This is known as shiva, meaning seven. On the first day, a candle is lit and left to burn throughout the week. The bereaved family will stay at home during this time to mourn and pray. Although the family will not work or participate in their everyday activities, guests are welcome to visit while the family is sitting shiva. The second mourning period lasts for 30 days after the funeral. This is known as shloshim, meaning thirty. During this time, the family will go back to their normal routines but will still recite prayers and hymns daily. The duration of this mourning may extend for longer than 30 days, especially when mourning the death of a parent, which could last for up to a year.

Jewish funeral services often involve prayers that end with ‘Amen’ or responsive readings, where the congregation replies in unison at certain points. If you are not Jewish you are still welcome to respond to prayers and readings in this manner, but equally it is acceptable for you to remain silent.

One very important thing to note is that traditionally Jewish people do not send flowers to funerals. Instead guests are encouraged to give donations, or tzedakah, as a tribute to the deceased. Often the family will suggest an appropriate charity.

Humanist

Humanists are non-religious. They follow the principle that this life is the only one we have and therefore when you are dead there is no moving on to another one. The focus of a Humanist funeral is on celebrating the life of the deceased. The person people knew is talked about, stories shared, and memories recalled. Their favourite music may be played, whatever it is. This is done by friends and family who are supported by an Officiant. The ceremony, usually a cremation, will be tailored to meet the family’s wishes rather than following a set pattern.